1:Sanders Z-5/4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Woman's work in Greece, as elsewhere, does not lend itself to neat, logical treatment. It does not have a beginning or any definable end. As a result, discussion of it moves from one topic to another with no necessary connection between them except the fact of the woman's involvement. As a wife, she is a partner to her husband; she bears and mothers the children; she prepares the food and still makes much of the clothing at home; she helps with the farm tasks; she has the responsibility for keeping the family well, or at least seeing an ailing member through an illness. To follow the women through the variety of these experiences is to move to the center of family life in rural Greece.

Getting Along with the Lord and Master

The world of the Greek woman revolves around the man. When young, her first concern — and the concern of her family — is to find a man and, through a dowry, "buy" him. After marriage she moves unobtrusively in his orbit and keeps their children, when they begin to arrive, in their proper course. Tradition still influences the way the woman gets along with the man.

In any social relationship, including that between husband and wife, a pattern of dominance and subordination develops. The Greeks assume that the man has the higher position. One village woman, when commenting on this, said with genuine earnestness: "My husband is a superior being; I must keep my distance." This sentiment is reflected in the relative social status of men and women, as well as in legal, moral, political, and economic rights. But even in delineating the differences in status between husband and wife one must bear in mind that broad social changes are under way throughout all of Greece which are leading to a rise in woman's position.

Some indication of woman's place is given by the preference for boys over girls. In some parts of Greece, a man when asked how many children he has will reply: "Two sons and, begging your pardon, one daughter." Or he might say: "Two children, one girl." In some villages of Thrace, however, the father might use a poetic touch in answering "two sons, one guest," implying that the daughter's permanent home is that of her husband. Since, true to the patriarchal, agrarian tradition, the line is continued in the son, one of the tests of a father's manliness is his ability to procreate sons. Preference for a son is reinforced by the need to collect a dowry for a daughter, who thus represents an economic drain. Indeed, the interest in the sex of the unborn child is so great that many ways have been developed for predicting the birth of a boy or a girl. Such practices, although taken jokingly or at best semiseriously by many, do figure prominently in women's conversations.

In Aetolia a relatively simple method may be used. One need only take a piece of wood from the loom, put it in a public road, and see who passes over it. If a man does, a boy is on the way; if a woman, a girl. In Gortynia,

1:Sanders Z-5 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

843 787 you put an orange seed in the fire and name a pregnant woman. If the seed jumps high, it will be a boy; if low, a girl. Much is made of the size and shape of the child in the womb. If the expectant mother "has a small belly," she will have a boy. Another method is to wrap a knife in a handkerchief and put it in a chair. If a pregnant woman sits in the chair, feels the object, and identifies it as a knife, then she will bear a boy. The same will hold true if by chance she uses her right foot every time she steps into a house. Or one can take the half-moon bone from the head of a fish, throw it on the head of an expectant mother without her knowledge. If she starts looking down, she will deliver a girl; if she feels in her hair to see what hit her, she will have a boy. Thus, from his earliest days, a son is given a sense of importance, a feeling which tends to be accentuated as he grows older.

562 834 576 593 [492] [626] Women, by observing the formal proprieties, show their deference to men and seemingly manifest to all about them their status as inferior beings. Foreigners in Greece are deceived, however, if they mistake this *form* for the *essence* of family life, since the Greek mother is a key figure in the home, even though she stands up when her husband comes into the room or walks if there is only one donkey. Village men, when asked about this last practice, often reply, "Why, my wife would be ashamed to be seen riding if I were walking. The other women would laugh her out of the village." Younger men, whose ideas on these matters differ from those of the previous generation, proudly assert that they make their wives ride if tired. Yet the women who may be walking behind their mounted husbands do not feel inferior, for they are observing an accepted custom. According to some observers, a woman who lets her husband enter first or have the best chair feels no more inferior than would a man in the West who holds the door open for a woman or gives her his seat on a crowded subway.

[312] [482] [626] [522] It is hard to know what goes on in a woman's mind when she is at the fountain filling two five-gallon tins to carry back home and suddenly is joined by her husband who has just returned from town by bus with a small twine bag of groceries. He offers the bag to her and says that he will carry the heavy tins, but she refuses. Does she say to herself: "He has his work and I have my work"; "I don't want the other men to laugh at him carrying water, which is woman's work"; "I don't want the women laughing at me for letting my husband do my work when I'm capable of doing it"; "He probably offers to do this for me so he can ask me to do something else much more disagreeable"? Nevertheless, the upshot is that she carries the tins. To be sure, the women refuse to smile when they hear the men in the home joking about the way some husband in Northern Greece, at the end of the Communist guerrilla war, supposedly made his wife walk in front in order to protect him from any undetected land mines left over from the war.

562 593 521 If the wife has worries, she discusses them with other women and only occasionally with her husband.

1:Sanders Z-5 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

851 608 [843] [835] [582] little importance. (A pregnant woman is not supposed to serve as a koumbara, for people say that something bad will happen either to her or the child being baptized. A person is also supposed to baptize only children of the same sex, for if he serves as a koumbaros of both boys and girls, two of these with the same godparent might fall in love, which would be considered incest since spiritual bonds count as much as biological kinship in determining marriage prohibitions.)

851 608 788 [789] After the small group of friends and relatives has gathered, the priest comes out from behind the altar. He usually displays great skill in handling the infant, even if the baby starts to howl his displeasure at the proceedings. The priest first turns the baby toward the east, blows into its face three times to chase away the evil spirits, seals it with the sign of the cross, and utters four exorcisms against temptation. Then the godparent renounces for the child "the devil and all his works" in answer to a thrice-repeated question from the priest, after which he recites the Apostles' Creed.[1]

[778] The tepid water standing in a large copper basin is next blessed by the priest, who pours consecrated oil on it. Then the godparent, who has rubbed the baby all over with oil, hands it to the priest who three times plunges it into the font while he recites the appropriate formula. Once the immersion has been completed, the priest anoints the baby in different parts of its body and holds it up to the altar three times if it is a boy. The baby is next dressed and carried around the font three times by the godparent who holds a candle in one hand; the priest also joins in this procession. The ceremony concludes with additional words from the New Testament and a few words of admonition to the child, whereupon those present congratulate the godparent with the wish, "may it live." Then everyone goes to the home of the parents for a tremendous dinner, usually featuring roast lamb, which is just as important a part of the affair as the church ceremony. The godparent is given a place of high honor. (He also has had the responsibility of choosing the name for the child, usually that of a grandparent.[2])

851 574 608 [262] [553] Although I have attended many social functions in Greece, the joy and fun which characterize the baptismal feasts stand out in my memory. Not only is the food delicious and plentiful, but there is invariably plenty of wine and good-natured bantering. Most of the time, too, there is dancing, spirited and informal. Children of the guests as well as the brothers and sisters of the newly baptized infant are often present, and manage to end up in the dance or very much in its way, thereby adding to the general merriment. Weddings, such as the one described in the previous chapter, are occasions for merriment because they give promise of providing children, especially boys, to continue the family line; the baptism is merry because this promise has been fulfilled.

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to read and write. Besides this, agricultural lectures were given to the farmers by the agriculturist of the area during the winter months on different topics concerning the farming life of the area. A series of 5 lectures were organized by the priest of the village on different topics such as history, travel, biography, and inventions. Thus the farmers of Megali Vrisi had an ample chance to get whatever they could from these different agencies.

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/76/ Part VII Religion

Magic. The people of Megali Vrisi, due to numerous activities of an educational character that have been established there, find themselves in a transition period of trying to put aside old beliefs and adopt new ones. They still believe that certain people in the village have power to command the spirits and perform miracles. A young man who thinks that his sweetheart does not like him finds as an outlet the consultation of magicians and their command of the spirits to change her mind. If a member of the family is in a foreign country or on travel the magicians are asked to order the spirits to protect them. A pregnant woman desiring to give birth to a boy instead of a girl asks the magicians to act favorably to her desires. The people who perform the role of a magician are old women with suspicious looks. The same women may act as mid-wives, too.

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Certain signs handed down from generation to generation are believed to be true. A black cat crossing the road is thought a bad sign. If you meet a priest early in the morning, they think the whole day will be filled with failures. Dogs crying mean somebody is going /77/ to die in the neighborhood. When the eyelid moves fast some good news is coming.

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The above are a few of the good and bad luck signs.

Religious beliefs. Almost every farmer has a Saint in whom he believes strongly. The ikon of the Saint, in front of which he

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of them. Like the eyes, they lead astray not through making false promises, but by engendering love. Speech is of extreme importance to the Greeks, since it establishes and fosters the all-important personal relationships. Almost everyone creates songs; love songs at the village festival, dirges, lullabies, songs of the way of life, songs of work, songs of one's village and of nature. It is important to find the graphic word in the most ordinary speech, and to turn a spicy phrase. Utterance will take the form of a small oration without creating self-consciousness; an answer is often incisive repartee. There are orations in the coffee house, and wherever a few people gather together. Even learned papers or scientific journals, when not under foreign influence, are often couched in oratory. *Couvenda*, conversation, is a recognized form of "passing the time", of entertainment, perhaps on a par with *syryani*. *Couvenda* is rarely desultory, or the mere exchange of information. It is usually contrapuntal virtuosity, incisive, combative, loud; and loudness is such a familiar quality of conversation that radios are turned on much too loud for the ears of foreigners. A statement or a question is countered by a challenging question. Tact and gentleness have no part here, insults are hurled, attacks are made, within the appropriate limits. A discussion is a battle of personal opinion, and its end is neither to reach the truth nor to reach a conclusion; its end is sheer enjoyment of vigorous speech.

The hair is a focus of erotic attraction. In the folk songs there is often the picture of a girl letting her hair down as a ladder hung for her lover. For the man, the moustache is a symbol of his manhood and attractiveness. The beard is not important, and in a folk song, a priest's wife calls her husband a bearded goat. A man without face hair is called a *Spanos*, and is a figure of derision in the folklore, and sometimes of fear.

Beyond the features of the head, very little of the body is mentioned in the personal folk songs. Genital organs must never be mentioned, and many women know no names for them. Out of over 400 love couplets analysed, only one mentions the breast, "your breast is like Paradise". Formally, as a general division of the body—the chest—the breast is named in the same way for men and women and the term can be used freely. In its form of a female breast it must not be mentioned, as none of the sexual areas are mentioned. Its functional term, however, the nursing-breast, *vyzi*, is commonly used without embarrassment and when a mother is nursing, there is no embarrassment about exposing the breast for suckling.

The sense of smell is extremely important to the Greeks. In the personal folk poems, there is much mention of sweet-smelling flowers, herbs, trees: "musk and cinnamon, a beautiful girl she is" says a rhyming game. An unexpected guest will be offered a "smell" of whatever the housewife is cooking, or the family is eating. And it

is smell which makes the cravings of a pregnant woman not to be denied. A neighbour automatically puts aside a bit of her cooking to send to the pregnant woman next door; and in a grocery store, a customer often offers a "smell" of the olives she has bought to a pregnant customer.

Orderliness is a highly valued quality. Love songs mention the orderly hair, the orderly teeth. The most recent book on child care lays great stress on avoiding the disordering of a child's teeth and facial contours, giving several sketches and photographs of wrong ways of laying the child in bed or postures in sitting at a school desk which might lead to crookedness, and detailed descriptions of specific distortions and their causes. In houses which contain only one room, areas of work and living are carefully specified and maintained through scrupulous order. The Greek equivalent of "set to rights" or "all right" or "under control" is "in order".

The covering of the *philotimo* and the covering of the naked fact find their counterpart, if not their basis, in the body. The body is never naked or, perhaps, only when absolutely necessary. Mothers often arrange to bathe and change the baby without undressing it all at once. The new pediatric practices and the new books on child care demand immersion, but it is all a matter of hygiene; no joy in the naked baby is mentioned anywhere. Conversely, dress, and particularly festive dress, "dress of splendour" and ornamentation, are of great importance, and in fact, are essential to complete the body. When beautiful girls are described, their clothing and their jewellery are given at least as much place as their bodily charms, and are not treated separately; and when a brave youth, a *pallicari*, is mentioned, his trappings are part of the picture. Jewellery and brilliant clothes, woven with gold and silver thread, figure largely in the lullabies, as well as in the love songs and wedding songs. And the lower world which holds no joy is a place where there are no ornamental trappings. The naked body, like the naked word, is stark and grim and incomplete.

The body and the self, the Greek person, delimit, pattern and give shape to relationships and experience. All relationships start with the body and continue along lines of physiological relatedness. They are extended along lines of concrete personal contact. Greeks travel, but mainly along a chain of personal relationships; they go to see a friend of a relative of a friend, and the end, however distant, is concretely linked through persons with the original person. Progress is amelioration of the concretely experienced, or the benefit of immediate relatives or friends or linked persons. The new can be introduced, not for the benefit of mankind or even the Greeks, but for the benefit of people along related lines, and better still, it can be introduced by a known and respected intermediary.

Figures on a chart mean very little to Greeks, and when they refer to people, may even be offensive. Foundations, such as the Near

584 882 increasing freedom in the lives of young people, particularly in Athens. Yet here too the web of relationships and extended responsibility is so widespread that the family, in effect, has its eyes on the young people wherever they go.

MATERNAL AND CHILD CARE

842 The Greeks love children. Boys are generally preferred; traditionally, sons are a sign of family vigour. Besides, a family not only loses its daughters, it has to pay out property with them. Childlessness is a terrible calamity, and the woman is held responsible. People say "the poor man", pitying the husband for his wife's sterility. A recent magazine report on current scientific discoveries combats this belief, telling its readers that potent men have been found to be sterile and that therefore wives are not always at fault for the childlessness of the family. Women fear to have anything done to their reproductive organs and will accept "maternity difficulties" without asking for medical help, lest this might somehow harm their fertility. A book 581 on maternal and child care, *For the Mother*, urges that before marriage, both family histories be examined for possible sterility.

For the Mother urges young people to choose mates with a view to progeny. As a sanction, it mentions that the ancient Greeks urged eugenic marriages; and that the term "eugenics" was invented by Xenophon. Young people are advised to see a doctor before making the final decision. They are further advised to choose according to firmness of flesh and orderliness of features and limbs, for seriousness tempered with cheerfulness, for optimism implemented by effective energy. Marriage with kin, and with people having family histories of tuberculosis, syphilis, alcoholism, psychasthenia, is to be avoided.

843 According to this manual, a young woman beginning a pregnancy is expected to notice first an indisposition, accompanied by the non-appearance of the menses: this the husband diagnoses for her with great joy. Next come the food whims and the nausea, and this is the time to go for obstetrical advice. The first two months are the critical ones for the life of the embryo; therefore, a mother is urged to take a vacation in the second month. After that she may resume her normal activities, taking care only to avoid over-exertion and jerky movements [515] In the last month she should not immerse herself in bathing, because of the danger of infection; for the same reason, she should avoid sexual intercourse in the last three weeks. In the last two weeks she [513] should avoid all exertion. She should sleep eight to ten hours daily during her pregnancy, never more, lest she become listless and melancholy. She should avoid large social gatherings, she should not play cards, she should drink nothing stronger than light wine, she should eat meals as balanced as is consistent with her means and her

normal diet. Her relatives should see to it that her days are calm and happy, and that she is surrounded by pictures of beautiful scenery and beautiful people, so that her baby will be beautiful. 843

Pregnancy is pictured here as a period of joyous anticipation. In the morning, after the fourth month, the mother is awakened by her gambolling embryo, who is saying to her, "Wake up, Mama; don't be in a hurry; I am coming gradually and constantly." She takes care of her breasts, massaging them and elongating the nipples, thinking of her baby. She prepares the layette, embroidering the pieces, caressing them and showing them to her visitors, taking joy in them.

Throughout her pregnancy a woman is expected to eat everything she craves. She can knock on any door where she smells cooking food and ask for a "smell". The satirist reporting on the Court of Petty Offences describes a case where a man complains that his neighbour has been pregnant almost steadily for four years, and that her pregnancies are too great a drain on his purse; the judge advises him to move to another location. The case is unusual, but not far-fetched.

There are pre-natal clinics as well as well-baby clinics, maintained by the state in the cities and provincial centres. Midwives are trained in a state institution and work in close co-operation with obstetricians. In many villages, however, there are no trained midwives available, and there is recourse to the "wise woman". The manual, *For the Mother*, gives a list of things to be prepared for a home birth; but many women in the cities, when they can afford it, prefer an obstetrician and a hospital delivery. [743] 844 759 [369]

Childbirth is an occasion of great importance. The mother has something of the Madonna about her now, and is idealized by all, and particularly by her husband, who offers her a second courtship at this time, bringing her special sweets and ornaments. The word *lecho*, describing her through her lochial period, is emotionally charged. Traditionally, a *lecho* is bedridden for eight days, and is under special regulations for the first 40 days. She may not go out until the "40 days" are over, and then she goes first to church. In some areas, no one is allowed to enter the house after sunset, until the 40 days are over. 844 846

Greek babies are swaddled except in very rare cases where a completely foreign manner of upbringing is followed. The newest manuals suggest half swaddling for the three months, that is, swaddling only of the trunk of the body, with legs and arms free. But this much is at any rate considered essential for a straight and firm back. In Athens there is a range of swaddling; simple people often swaddle completely for at least three months, but may leave the baby's arms and legs free by day after the fortieth day. In the village, the old swaddling is practised for the most part, along with the newer ways. Traditionally the baby is swaddled all over, until it is a stiff bundle. Each knee is straightened out; in many regions, each leg is wrapped separately, 854 856 [369]

854 and then the two are wrapped together; the arms are pressed against
856 the sides and then the swaddling cloth is wrapped tightly over all. Swaddling is imperative to make the baby grow straight, tall and strong; most of all to prevent it from becoming crooked.

As we have mentioned, traditional and scientific opinion agree that the baby must never be held nestling in the crook of the arm until it can sit up by itself. The gesture of mother love is not that of the curved arms. Even an unswaddled baby is held like a long stiff bundle against the body within an imaginary swaddling band. In villages, babies are often carried in slings, lying stiffly against the mother's hip and swinging with her walk; or they are carried standing in the sling against her back. The Greek cradle is a swing, which can be moved near to where the mother is working, so that she can pull the rope to rock it. At night it is put beside her bed. The pediatricians inveigh strongly against its use, considering that it spoils the baby, urging the use of bassinets and cribs.

853 It is important that the baby be breast-fed; in fact this is taken for granted. According to the child care manuals, it is extremely rare for a mother to have no milk, and slightly less rare that she have
369 not enough milk. The city pediatricians find it necessary, however, to make impassioned pleas for the mother's own milk, pointing out the dangers incurred in engaging a wet-nurse, the criminality towards one's own baby, who has an inherited right to his mother's milk, and the crime against the baby of the wet-nurse, who has been left in the village without a mother. Women are reminded that the great Homeric mothers, Hecuba and Penelope, suckled their own children. Some factories have baby nurseries, mainly to enable mothers to nurse their own children. When supplementary feeding is needed, it is to be given with a spoon, lest the baby find the rubber nipple
[862] easier and refuse the breast. Asses' milk is recommended as nearest to mother's milk; cow's and goat's milk are recommended next to this.

Traditionally, the baby is given *glykanisso*, anise water, and camomile the first day, and is allowed to suck the colostrum the second day. Pediatricians urge that all ingestion should begin with suckling and that no other food be given. Babies are to receive no solid food until the sixth or even the eighth month. Nursing is recommended until the fourteenth month, or even up to two years; and the two year
[862] period is traditional. Weaning is gradual; pediatricians as well as tradition recommend the smearing of bitter stuff, perhaps quinine, on the nipple, or the offering of sweetened milk. Nursing need not
[843] be interrupted for a pregnancy and, in fact, may be good for the growing embryo. Juices of every variety of available fruit are recommended at three or four months, as well as strained vegetable soups. Traditionally, the baby joins the family at mealtime as soon as he can sit up; he is allowed to eat of the family meal, given choice slowly and carefully. At first, hard crusts and bones only are allowed,